



The President's Daily Brief

October 24, 1975

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LEBANON

Heavy fighting flared again in Beirut yesterday as efforts continued, without success, to find and release two US officials kidnaped on Wednesday.

Fighting subsided last night, but small arms fire was again reported before dawn today. An around-the-clock curfew has been imposed in some areas of the city. The apparent murder of two Palestine Liberation Organization military officers in Christian areas in and near Beirut on Wednesday night has contributed to increased tensions. Although the Palestinians were not involved in yesterday's fighting, more fedayeen were in evidence manning barricades, and it is feared that less radical leaders will come under pressure to retaliate for the murders.

Beirut radio announced at midday yesterday that all roads in the city were unsafe. For the first time in this round of the fighting, the Beirut-Damascus road has been cut just outside Beirut, adding a new element of nervousness among city residents.

Both Interior Minister Shamun and Prime Minister Karami announced yesterday that "strict measures" had been devised to stop the fighting and would be implemented by nightfall. Neither, however, elaborated on what these measures entailed. Press reports from Beirut indicate some 700 Palestinian military police have joined Lebanese security forces in a new effort to end the fighting. Greater use of the army is apparently not involved; Karami addressed the question in a speech to parliament and seemed to dismiss the possibility of using the army as potentially too destructive.

Karami is coming under increasing attack for his government's inability to handle the situation and is himself increasingly at loggerheads with President Franjiyah, who continues to support the

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intransigent stand of the right-wing Christians. Karami, apparently in frustration at Franjiyah's obstructionism, is reported to have begun drafting his resignation on Wednesday, but he was dissuaded by the Syrians.

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt is still in Damascus, where he has been discussing the Lebanese situation for the past few days. An embassy source in Beirut reports that the Syrians are again trying to persuade him to join the cabinet with Phalangist leader Pierre Jumayyil. Jumblatt has consistently refused to be associated with Jumayyil in a new cabinet line-up.

It now appears that the two kidnaped US officials are in the hands of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. [REDACTED]

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efforts to locate them have been to no avail. Lebanese security authorities say they have no firm leads. Fatah leaders, who assisted in obtaining the release of a kidnaped US army colonel in June, are also alleged to have no information on their whereabouts.

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ANGOLA

The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola has launched a major propaganda campaign against "foreign intervention" in Angola. The campaign, probably led by military hardliners in the Movement, very likely is designed to set the stage for a unilateral declaration of independence, possibly before November 11, the date Portugal is scheduled to turn authority over to the Angolans.

Last night the Popular Movement ordered mobilization of all men between the ages of 18 and 35 to combat an "invading" force in the south said to number nearly 1,000 troops, including mercenaries and South African regulars. According to the Popular Movement's announcement, the invading force has advanced approximately 150 miles into southern Angola. Popular Movement forces in that part of the territory are stretched thin.

The South African government has a small military team in southern Angola to train troops of the National Front. The South Africans, assigned to provide advice and rear-echelon support, have occasionally become involved in fighting.

The mobilization order and the charge of foreign intervention come at a time when the Popular Movement is beginning to feel heavy pressure in the north from military operations of the National Front and the approaching deadline for Angolan independence. In northern Angola, the National Front, [redacted] has advanced to within 13 miles of Luanda, and some fighting is now taking place there.

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The approaching independence deadline takes on added importance for the Popular Movement with each passing day by virtue of Portugal's continued insistence that it will not transfer sovereignty to the Popular Movement alone. The Movement is equally insistent that it is the only liberation group capable and deserving of running the territory after independence. It is attempting to discredit its rivals as instruments of foreign powers and not true representatives of the Angolan people.

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The Popular Movement's ability to carry out a successful mobilization is questionable. The Movement has always had strong popular support in Luanda, but its support in the rural areas and even in the towns of central and southern Angola that it claims to control seems less certain. There, the Popular Movement's mobilization efforts could well bog down.

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A press report yesterday from Lusaka quotes reliable sources as stating that 1,000 Cuban "volunteers" are fighting in Angola.

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The actual number of Cuban military personnel involved cannot be determined with confidence. The number is probably no more than several hundred, and the Cubans most likely will be used in support and advisory roles.

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NOTES

Additional information appears to confirm that some Syrian reservists have been recalled to active duty and that Syrian forces are at a higher stage of alert.

[redacted] has received information that a large call-up of reservists was begun two weeks ago and carried out quietly. He believes that the Syrians have assumed a higher alert posture, inasmuch as the number of soldiers in the streets of Damascus is only about half that ordinarily seen. [redacted]

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[redacted] Saudi and Syrian forces are scheduled to hold two weeks of joint maneuvers in the Heights area beginning November 1. Some of the military measures recently observed on the Golan Heights may be related to preparations for the exercise. On the other hand, the maneuver itself could serve as a cover for operations against Israel.

* * *

Moroccan King Hassan gave every indication that he is going ahead with his planned march into the Spanish Sahara. In a brief radio broadcast yesterday directed to the inhabitants of the region, Hassan reviewed Morocco's claim to historic sovereignty over the area.

The King appealed to the inhabitants of the territory to renew their religious and political allegiance to him and not to resist the march by force. He did not announce a date for the entry of the marchers into Spanish Sahara [redacted]

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[redacted] Mauritania, which hopes to partition Spanish Sahara with Morocco, has publicly supported Rabat's planned march, but opposes using force to settle the dispute.

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The Soviets again are hinting that they might be willing to engage in bilateral talks on naval limitations in the Indian Ocean.

On October 16, the head of the USA Institute, Georgy Arbatov, told Congressman Vanik that General Secretary Brezhnev personally supports talks on the issue. Arbatov said that Brezhnev would have endorsed talks last July if the subject had come up during the General Secretary's meeting with the congressional delegation led by Senators Hubert Humphrey and Hugh Scott. On October 17, some members of the institute reminded another visiting US official that the Soviets had taken "small private steps before" on the issue but that the US had not responded. This is probably a reference to an exchange in 1971 when Moscow first broached the idea of a joint understanding on limiting naval deployments in the Indian Ocean. The Soviets never followed up when the US responded four months later.

* * *

Thousands of Portuguese radical leftists marched through Lisbon last night in a Communist-sponsored demonstration, but there were no violent or untoward incidents.

Despite open talk of a possible coup, the government did not try to stop the demonstration; it evidently is still playing for time in its struggle to survive. The Communists, in allying themselves with the far left, clearly have the objective of bringing down the government by creating sheer chaos, and by splitting the Socialists and Popular Democrats, who are its principal bulwark. Thus far at least, the two parties are sticking together. The next few days may be decisive ones for Prime Minister Azevedo. The government's offer of amnesty expires tomorrow, but no armed civilian groups have turned in any weapons.

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EGYPT

President Sadat's position of leadership in the Arab world is hanging in the balance as a result of the second Sinai disengagement agreement. His position within Egypt is sound, but there too he is vulnerable over the longer term.

His best and most important friend at the moment is the US. He will use his visit here next week to seek further tangible expressions of that friendship in order to buttress Egypt against isolation in the Arab world and to reassure his domestic constituents that his foreign policy has not bankrupted the country.

Egypt's leadership of the Arab world has always been basically a state of mind. Egypt is not the birthplace of Arab nationalism. Syria, Iraq, and even Saudi Arabia can lay better claims to this title. Egypt lacks the natural resources to give it the economic importance of Saudi Arabia and too many political constraints to make it, like Lebanon, a commercial center of the Arab world. Its people are regarded, by themselves and by other Arabs, as a breed apart.

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Egyptian leadership in the Arab world has depended on essentially ephemeral factors. These factors are not working to Sadat's advantage as they worked to Nasir's; as a result, Sadat could lose his ability to influence and guide the other Arabs.

Egypt has been the largest and militarily the strongest state bordering Israel, whose existence is the only thing that has ever unified the modern

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Arab world. It has been a basic tenet of Arab doctrine that there can be no war against Israel without Egypt, and Egypt has been able to command the deference of the other Arabs by exploiting their fear of the consequences if it signed a separate peace accord with Israel.

By signing the second Sinai agreement, Sadat has let slip a part of this hold on the Arabs. Although he does not regard the agreement as a final peace, the other Arabs are not sure Egypt will take a further part in the struggle for the return of the occupied territories. Without Egypt, Arabs have less leverage with Israel but greater freedom to plan their moves without regard to Egypt's interests.

Nasir was able to use the tide of anti-colonialism at mid-century, plus an electric personality and a crusading zeal, to put himself at the head of a resurgent Arab nationalism. He and Egypt seized the leadership of the Arab political world when other Arab states, because of internal instability or simple default, were unable to compete.

Sadat is no Nasir. Even though Sadat's practical accomplishments exceed his predecessor's, he is not able to inspire the Arabs as Nasir did. Sadat must instead produce solid results and the prospect for more, not merely for Egypt but for all Arabs. He has not fully accomplished this.

Memories Fade

Memory has faded of the war that gained the first return of Egyptian and Syrian territory, that enabled the Arab oil states to flex their muscles through the embargo, and that led to international recognition for the Palestinians. The memory that it was Sadat who launched these successes has also faded.

Sadat's standing as a leader has suffered subsequently because he has sought to achieve Arab goals by gradual steps. A policy featuring moderation and negotiation is suspect in Arab eyes because it is both unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

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Nasir's standing depended as much on his ability to shift with popular opinion as on an ability actually to lead and to influence. He never appeared less radical than the most radical of the Arabs. He never appeared less dedicated to the Palestinian cause than the most dedicated Palestinian.

He was the number-one Arab, not because he produced results either for the other Arabs or for Egypt, but because his radicalism, his emotional speeches, and his bold strokes of policy were familiar and comfortable for the Arabs.

Sadat has done little to adjust his policy or his goals to this Arab mainstream. He has, in fact, rejected the rhetoric and the emotionalism that have long been the badge of the proper Arab and, with them, he has rejected the rigidity and inflexibility that have characterized their dealings with the non-Arab world and their attitude toward Israel.

Moderation stood him in good stead when he was able to demonstrate to the Arabs that compromise, even with the Israeli enemy, accomplished more for Egypt and even for Syria than radicalism ever had. He has lately been unable, however, to show that accommodation is producing further results, either for Syria or for the Palestinians. The second Sinai accord is regarded among other Arabs as having produced too little for Egypt to have been worth the price.

A Residual Recognition

Sadat has not lost entirely and forever his ability to lead the Arabs. There is enough residual recognition of the leading role Cairo has played to make the Arabs shun, almost as a reflex action, any move to turn away completely from Egypt. Many Arabs also hope that Egypt has not permanently abandoned the Arab struggle and will in a few years be back playing the leading role.

Jordan has attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to mediate Egypt's differences with Syria over the disengagement, for no better reason than that Egypt is the principal Arab state and must not be allowed to isolate itself from its neighbors.

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Saudi Arabia [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] stands with Sadat. Less radical Palestinians have not cut their ties, because they recognize that Egypt's support is vital if they are ever to gain anything by negotiations.

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Syria, historically Egypt's main rival for pan-Arab leadership, is feeling unfulfilled, and it is on Syria's attitude that Sadat's rise or fall as an Arab leader will depend in the last analysis.

Few Arab leaders, no matter what their basic attitude toward Egypt, are pleased by the second Sinai accord; most are sympathetic with Syria's frustration over the lack of progress toward another Golan disengagement.

As has been demonstrated time and again, few Arabs are willing to speak out for moderation when one of their number remains vocally dissatisfied. The general Arab silence on the disengagement has not to this point helped Syria, but it has also not helped Egypt. Silence in this case does not imply consent and, if ever forced to a choice between support for Egypt's position or support for Syria's and the Palestinians', few Arabs would back Egypt.

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